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Case Histories by Kate Atkinson, Little, Brown and Company, 2008

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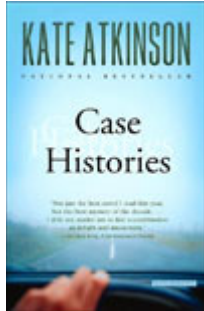
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Recommended Readings



Case Histories

by Kate Atkinson, Little, Brown and Company, 2008

Reviewed by Judi Morrel

Which is it - a complex whodunit or a sprawling family saga? Perhaps it is both and surely it does not matter; fans of either genre will relish English author Kate Atkinson's *Case Histories*. The world-weary private detective at the center of the novel, Jackson Brodie, is engaged by several different clients in Cambridge, England, to investigate three "cold cases" involving the decade-old murder of a young woman adored by her father, the disappearance three decades ago of the youngest sister in a clan of four girls, and the 25-year-old ax murder of a young man by his even younger wife. Jackson, a former police inspector, is struggling with his own chaotic personal life, a life in which his ex-wife uses his adoration of their young daughter to manipulate him. The three plot lines intertwine with one another and with Jackson's story in unexpected ways. Atkinson paints psychologically complex, multilayered characters, and as the stories unfold, Jackson finds them more and more personally unsettling for reasons which are only revealed near the end of the novel. Fans of murder mysteries will revel in the intricate plot twists and turns; fans of family dramas will enjoy the depth and vividness of the family dynamics. Both will meet some appealing off-beat characters, including oddly enough, a murderer, along the way.

- Judi Morrel is Interim Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Butler University.